

John Boccacino:

Hello and welcome back to the Cuse Conversations Podcast. I'm John Boccacino, senior internal communications specialist at Syracuse University.

Anish Shroff:

The one part of this story, which I have told, and I have spoken to South Asians about it, and I said, the one part of this story that we need to take ownership is this is not a profession that is looked upon favorably in the South Asian community. You're not going to be a doctor, you're not going to be an engineer, you're not getting your MBA. You don't want to go to grad school. What are you doing? He wants to go and do what, communications? That's just not what we do.

A lot of South Asians who may have wanted to pursue this path don't get the one thing that they need, and the one thing that I had and I didn't know it was so unique until many years later when I started talking to others like me, and they would ask me the question, were your parents cool with this? I was like, yeah, my parents encouraged me. Really? Yeah. I never felt the pressure that I had to go be a doctor or a lawyer or an engineer or go get an MBA or do one of those things that are traditionally associated with the South Asian subculture. From that standpoint, we've got to take ownership and we got to encourage our kids to do what you want. I was lucky.

John Boccacino:

Our guest today on the 'Cuse Conversations Podcast is Anish Shroff, who earned a bachelor's degree in broadcast journalism from the S.I. Newhouse School of Public Communications in 2004. As an undergraduate student, he was driven to break into the ultra competitive field of sportscasting, holding down on-air roles with the prestigious student-run radio station, WAER. The hard work and dedication certainly paid off, as today, Anish is entering his second season handling radio play-by-play duties for the NFL's Carolina Panthers. He has also handled play-by-play for ESPN's coverage of college football, college basketball, men's lacrosse and baseball. Let me tell you, he's got a terrific story to share with our Syracuse University audience. Anish, I know your schedule is crazy busy, but thank you for stopping by to join us.

Anish Shroff:

It's nice to come up for a little bit of air and it's nice to talk to an old friend.

John Boccacino:

I tell you, for those who are listening, Anish and I, I was an '03 grad, he was an '04 grad. We have some stories we can share, some of those Friday morning sports casting classes with the esteemed voices of The Orange, who were our teachers in Newhouse. From that day where you were in '04 to where you are now, just how surreal has your journey been?

Anish Shroff:

It's funny because it's probably the one thing I don't think we do enough in this business, which is reflect. You're so geared and driven to what's next and the next assignment and the next goal and where you want to get to and the next place you have to travel to. You very rarely get a chance to look back and say, wow, it's been a journey, and it's been a journey with ups and downs and rollercoaster moments and tipping point moments. When I think about it from where you were coming out of college and you start to think of who that person was, trying to find their voice, trying to figure out how they

were going to make it in this business to now, I think when you have those few moments where you can reflect, it is special and it is rewarding to see where things started and where they've ended up.

John Boccacino:

Especially with the fraternity of NFL play-by-play broadcasters, Syracuse and Newhouse produced a ton of amazing broadcasters. I know John Murphy with the Buffalo Bills, he suffered a stroke. He's sidelined for the time being, but he's a Syracuse alum, Dave Pasch, Syracuse alum. I could rattle them off, but you know them better. You live that life. Do you ever pinch yourself to think I am part of this select fraternity of people who call games on a weekly basis?

Anish Shroff:

All the time. All the time. Even today, a few hours earlier, I was at the stadium doing some stuff for the Panthers, and I'd gone to Starbucks just to get a quick bite to eat and a coffee. I'm walking back and you kind of look up and see the stadium and I'm thinking, this is where I work. It feels surreal. It's an NFL team. The NFL is the biggest sports brand there is in America, and to have one of those 32 jobs, that's special. I have a lot of gratitude toward the Panthers organization for not just hiring me, but in my year plus, just the way they've treated me and the way they've made me feel welcome and appreciated, that's not lost on me.

John Boccacino:

Did you have a welcome to the NFL moment?

Anish Shroff:

Yeah. Last season, the Carolina Panthers had themselves this season. There were so many moving parts and so many things that changed. Four games in, the head coach is fired. Shortly thereafter, the face of the franchise, Christian McCaffrey, is traded. You're sitting there, one in five leaving SoFi Stadium in LA and you're wondering, man, will they ever win another game this season? Then the next thing you know, they go into the next game at home against Tampa Bay, Tom Brady. Nobody's expecting anything. PJ Walker, who if not for injuries, probably doesn't even make the 53 man roster, once training camp broke and once the preseason ended, PJ Walker's getting to start. It was the second or third career start. He's got Tom Brady, they win 21 to three, and you're going, man, I've seen it all. Then the following week, PJ throws his 62 yard touchdown pass at the very end to DJ Moore at the end of regulation, and that tied the game. If the Panthers made the extra point, they win.

They miss the extra point, miss a field goal in overtime, lose the game, and you're thinking, wow, this rollercoaster of emotions. Then the next thing you know, you look up, it's week 17, they're playing the Bucs on the road, and if the Panthers had won that game, they would be in first place in the division, and all they would've to do is win in week 18 and you guarantee yourself not just a playoff spot, but a home playoff game. Instead, what we witnessed with Carolina up double digits in the fourth quarter, we ended up being on the receiving end, the Panthers did, of the last great game of Tom Brady's career. Tampa ends up winning the game. Panthers finished seven and 10, a game out of first place in the NFC South. The welcome to the NFL moment was just really the odyssey that was the Carolina Panther's 2022 season.

John Boccacino:

We always hear about how NFL teams use training camp in the preseason to get ready for the season. For a broadcaster, how do you use the preseason to try to find your voice and get back in that rhythm?

Anish Shroff:

Really, it's with just connecting with coaches, connecting with players, finding the stories. When you're the voice of an NFL team on a local level, part of your job when you do these broadcasts is to connect the players, connect the coaches to the community, give the fans, give your audience people to root for. Tell them who they are as people beyond statistics, beyond their accomplishments on the field. Having a year now under my belt, you've gotten to know some of these guys, and there's a theme on the offensive line where you got a bunch of guys who were young dads, Jeremy Chin, one of the stars on defense, took up Pilates in the off season. You have these different anecdotes about these different players and why they're doing what they're doing, and you learn about them and then it's your job to relay that to your audience.

For me, training camp is a great time where it's relaxed, it's not as tense. You're not in the rigors of the regular season. Guys are laid back and willing to talk. You have a chance to get to know these guys and get to know who they are as people.

John Boccacino:

In your situation, I'm glad you mentioned that team and that community of both building up that trust. It's a very precarious role I would feel being the voice of a team. Players are often told to not trust the media, and yet you've got to forge that relationship. What are some keys to your success? How have you been able to build that relationship with the players, the coaches in the front office?

Anish Shroff:

Yeah. This is going to sound so simple, it's going to sound so rudimentary, but first and foremost, be a human being. I remember getting that advice years ago, years ago from Peter Gammons when he was at ESPN, and I just thought, man, this is a job where we are constantly dealing with people. It's a human enterprise. I just think sometimes we lose sight that players are people, we're people, there's a shared humanity, and if you're treating them and talking to them that they're like a commodity, you're going to get a reaction from that. You may get a hostility, you may get a wall up type of demeanor, but I just kind of went in. I said, be a human being. As simple as that sounds, it works.

John Boccacino:

What role do you think sports plays in serving as an escape from the complexities of someone's day-to-day life?

Anish Shroff:

I think it needs to be an escape. When I was young and I had to deal with some things, with a parent being sick and family trouble, sports was that escape. It was the two, three hours of a day where you can get lost in someone else's trials and tribulations, and I think we need that. We had a stretch there, and people may feel differently about this, but we had a stretch there where it seemed the real world really bled into the sports world. I think why people became so angry is that it took away that escape route. The walls were broken down. The one place that you had to go to get away from it all doesn't exist anymore.

Now everything from the real world is seeping into that, and I think people had a reaction to that. I do think it's an escape. I do think it's that three hours during an afternoon where if you're calling a game at Bank of America Stadium, you've got people from all ends of the political spectrum, from every different race, religion, ethnicity, and yet they unite under a common banner, keep pounding, they reunite. They unite as fans of the Carolina Panthers. We look for disqualifiers now in society. If you're on social media, people see benign stuff and have this very, very harsh reaction to it. We're looking for things to divide us and polarize us, and media's figured out that that stuff sells. Politicians have figured out that that stuff gets them on TV and it works.

I just think from where I stand in the sports arena, why can't we do the opposite? Why do we constantly have to drive discord and push disagreement? Why can't we find a way to unite? I think when you're the voice of a team and you do it on a local level, to me that's part of the responsibility. Can you be somebody that brings your community together, whether it's on air or through your dealings in the community? I do take that to heart.

John Boccacino:

When it comes to that community that you're serving by being the radio voice of the team, I know you lived in the Charlotte area for a while, so it wasn't like you were an outsider coming into this market. How have you built up that trust and that relationship with your audience?

Anish Shroff:

What's been great is through ESPN, having done a lot of games over the years in various sports in the ACC and SEC footprint, there's a crossover. These fans who root for the Panthers on Sundays, they might be Clemson fans or NC State fans or UNC fans. Well, they root for the Panthers on Sundays, so there was a little bit of currency that I already had with them, but part of my job also is to do some community events for the Panthers and to be out there and represent the team in those settings. I've got one Wednesday night coming up. For me, that's a part of the job description. The Panthers have arguably the biggest platform of any enterprise here in the Carolinas. It appealed to me because it gave me a chance to further connect not just with this community, but further dig in deeper in terms of roots with this community that I've now called home for more than a decade.

John Boccacino:

A lot of times people view the radio or the TV voice of a team as a "Homer", somebody who is rooting. Obviously you want the team you're covering to do well. How do you walk that line between the friendships you formed and wanting to be an impartial reporter who's telling you what is exactly happening on the field?

Anish Shroff:

Yeah, that's a great question, and I think there's two sides to it. I think from one end, your audience is not dumb, so you can't lie to your audience. If things are going poorly and the team is playing poorly and they have a bad game, you can't sugarcoat that. You have to say it. At times last year when the team was not playing well, we said they weren't playing well. At the same time, I remember going into it and thinking, okay, I'll try to have a level of detachment here. Very quickly you do realize that when I'm calling a Panther game, I do want the Panthers to win. When I'm calling a game for ESPN, I don't care who wins. I just want a close game. That's the only thing I root for. Very quickly, because you're so immersed in it and you're in there with coaches, you're in there with players and you see these guys

every day and you're on the team playing after the game, it's hard not to create a sense of attachment, a sense of even ownership to a certain degree.

For me, I know the fans that are listening are Panther fans, mostly. I want them to hear in my voice when the Panthers do something good, and if it goes the other way, maybe you hear a little bit of dejection. I don't think there's anything wrong with that. At the same time, I'm not going to go on the air outwardly rooting for the home team to win, but the way we present the information, again, for a home team broadcast, it might be 65% Panthers, 35% visiting team. There is a fine line there, but I think you have to be honest with your audience. You have to be honest with them if things aren't going well. At the same time, I don't think there's anything wrong with being excited when the team that you're covering day in, day out, every single weekend does well and they're winning. They want to hear that excitement in your voice as well.

John Boccacino:

You're absolutely right. You do them a disservice by not painting the true picture of what's going on in the field, and the fans who do root for the team, they want to hear someone who gets excited for the highs and rides the lows out with them as well. You're almost like a therapist in a sense when it comes to the sports fans you're broadcasting the games for.

Anish Shroff:

I don't know if it's quite therapy, but again, from our standpoint, the job is more fun if the team that you're covering day in, day out is winning. We all know that, the job is more fun. It's more fun to walk on the Syracuse campus when football is winning and basketball is going to the Sweet 16 or the Elite Eight or the Final Four, or what have you. It's more fun to be in that place.

It's the same for us. I think I just kind of look at it as you're the soundtrack for people's emotions at times. I don't know if that's quite therapy because sometimes you can take them on a bit of a roller coaster, and I know we did last year, but I just think it's a different type of job than I was used to doing where we get two different teams pretty much every week with my work at ESPN. You study up one, you study up the other, and then you present a narrative. For me it was, hey, I just hope this game doesn't turn into a blowout. I want it to be close and competitive because that's where the drama is, but no. When I'm doing a Panthers Gabe, yeah, I want the Panthers to win, and I don't think there's anything wrong with that.

John Boccacino:

How did you go about discovering your unique voice and your unique broadcasting style

Anish Shroff:

Experimentation. Experimentation. I think there was a certain point when I started out when I was a sports director in Yakima, Washington, we used to do sports from this green screen and we're out in Washington state. If we're doing a story on the Washington Huskies or the Seattle Mariners, I'd be standing up at this green screen and behind me you would have a logo of the Huskies or the Mariners. I remember one time talking to our graphics guy and I asked him and I said, is there a way that we can change that? Is there a way that we can try something different? He goes, yeah, nobody's ever asked, but we could. I remember one time I said, hey, can you give me Tony Soprano behind me on the green screen? He goes, sure. I remember writing my lead in to what we had behind me, and a lot of times I

would have a lead in that had nothing to do with the team or the video that was about to roll. It was kind of an entry point.

As a writer, you're taking your audience from left field to the pitchers mound. Tony Soprano was left field, and then you're going to bring that story into the pitchers mound. I remember my news director going to me, yeah, you put Tony Soprano up there and I was wondering, where's he going with this? The light bulb just kind of went off. When he said, where's he going with this, I said, so did I get you? He goes, yeah, yeah, no, you had my attention. It was like, okay. Find that different way to tell a story. If I'm putting a Mariner's logo behind me, it's just another story about the Mariners, but if it's written a certain way and you've got a Tony Soprano reference and then that's going to take you into the Mariner's story, you can hold your viewer's attention.

That experimentation, using history, literature, pop culture, just cultural literacy in general, I just thought this works. So much of this is trial and error. You throw paint at the wall and then you go, not it, tear it down. You try it again, but when you get something and you nail it, that's an arrow that you have in your quiver forever and you can go to it when you need to do it. I remember my first few jobs, there was a lot of experimentation with storytelling, and then having done television at a local level, having anchored, having hosted at ESPN, having done play by play on radio and television, having done talk radio, you kind of draw on all different parts of the industry, all these different mediums, and you pick different things that translate and there's a lot of crossover. I think over time you kind of concoct your own style.

The other thing I would say is I read a lot, and that would be my advice to any young broadcaster who might be listening to this. Read; read a lot. Even if you want to do sports, read, and not just about sports. You get so many great ideas from reading. When I was a freshman in college, I would just write down in a notebook words, phrases, turn of phrases that I would come across in my reading, stuff that I liked. Often times it would be I would see a word and then I would put the phrase around it. Hey, where could I potentially use this? Whether it's anchoring, whether it's hosting, whether it's doing play by play. These notebooks started to fill up over time, and now we've got the notepad app on your iPhone, so it makes it even easier, but so much of what we do is based in language. All of it really is. Language is our currency. The more you do this, you try to find ways to manipulate language and get creative with language and have fun with language.

I feel that's becoming something that's not valued as much as it used to be. It used to be about the ability to write, and now it's just sometimes it feels like it's just hot takes and it's not really about the quality of writing, and writing transcends to everything, whether it's something that's scripted or even play by play when you're writing in real time without an edit button. Now sometimes it feels like it's a decibel game. Whoever screams loudest wins. Whoever says the most outrageous thing wins instead of how you say it and what you say it. Maybe I'm a dinosaur, but I still see some value in how you say it and what you say.

John Boccacino:

Now, I want to go back in the way back machine a little bit with the next couple of the questions here. Growing up, you were the son of parents who came to this country from India, first generation. How did you get into American sports and who were some of those teams and athletes that really ignited that spark for you in sports?

Anish Shroff:

Yeah. That's a great question. I always say baseball was a way in, not just for me but for my family. My dad got here in 1972 to study originally, and he got to New York and he was living in Hoboken, right when George Steinbrenner bought the Yankees and the Yankees went on that great run in the 70s. They'd been to a couple of World Series, they lose, then they go sign Catfish Hunter, they bring in Reggie Jackson. My dad started following those Yankee teams when they had Catfish and Reggie and Willie Randolph and Nettles and Thurman Munson, and he became a baseball fan. Then the 80s sort of roll in and the Met Zone, the town, so he would watch all these Met Games with Doc and Daryl and Sid Fernandez and Ron Darling and those teams, and Keith Fernandez.

We became a baseball family. Then when I started playing Little League right around six years old, T-Ball, we started becoming a baseball family, and that acculturation started with baseball. For my family, we became this baseball family, and by the time I got to 11 or 12, my mom was bringing orange slices to the game. These were people who didn't know anything about baseball when they grew up and where they grew up, but it became such a big part of our lives. Then baseball cards, that was the other one. I had an uncle who lived in Jersey City and he had this store and he would get these baseball cards, and every time we would go over there, he would give me this little sandwich bag. Remember those brown paper bags? The sandwich bags, and they were filled with baseball cards. We would go through them and I would sort them with my brother.

Again, that's how you learned back in the day. I became at a very young age, a baseball nut, and then I started collecting football cards and basketball cards. Then anytime sports was on television, we didn't have cable, but anytime it was on TV, we were watching. Then it became a fight every morning for the Newark Star Ledger who could get to the front door first, who could get to the sports section, and again, to the under 30 crowd, this is probably alien stuff. What's a newspaper? You and I are of the same age. We would be reading box scores and you're perusing box scores. You almost felt like you knew more than you do now in some ways because all that information was in front of you.

Even if you weren't a fan of college football or college basketball, you would read something in the sidebar that intrigued you because by physical proximity it was on the same page and you just kind of consumed everything. Neither of us wanted to give up the sports section, so whoever got it first held onto it, and we read everything and we read the transactions on the back page and studied the standings. By the time I got to fifth and sixth grade and in a middle school you've created this little virtual library of sports information, and to my parents' credit, they encouraged it. That more than anything was the key. They encouraged it, but it started with, I think my dad coming here, getting into baseball. Then once I got playing Little League, and once I got into that, it just kind of took off and we became a household where the Yankees were on every night and the Giants and the Jets were on during the weekends and NBA on NBC was on all the time. I would sneak up past my bedtime to watch Monday Night Football.

John Boccacino:

I love reminiscing. Yes, for those who are listening who are of the post newspaper era, newspapers used to print these things called box scores. You could keep...

Anish Shroff:

Box scores.

John Boccacino:

I have the 1995 Chicago Cubs lineup in my head, all those favorite teams of mine growing up, just like you do with the Yankees, with the Giants, and it's so cool the way that your parents adopted the sports of their new homeland, and then you became such a rabid sports fan and they supported your dreams, like all good parents should do. Do you remember who the first sportscaster was that really you admired that you had a fascination for?

Anish Shroff:

There were a couple. It wasn't just one, but there were a couple. One was Bob Costas. Costas to me, I don't know how I saw this right away, but I remember when I was little, if you go back early 90s, the NBA on NBC game opens that he would narrate, they resonated with me on such a deep level. The way he was able to manipulate language, the way he could crystallize a narrative and take a story and make it come to life and really sell what's at stake, really make the game feel big, that resonated with me at a young age. Mike and the Mad Dog on the radio, I listened to them when I came home from school every single day. That was the soundtrack. We were a big radio family, 1010 WINS News in New York, they used to have a saying, you give us 22 minutes, we give you the world, and it was this all news station.

We had a little radio that was hooked up to the light in our downstairs bathroom, so once you flip on the light, the radio would go on and it was 1010 WINS News. At 15 and 45, they would have the sports update. Every morning before school, I would make sure I would time my showers where I would be in there at 15 and 45 so I could get the sports news. I listened to a lot of sports on the radio, Eye and Eagle doing the Jets, John Sterling and Michael K doing the Yankees. Then our local news guy, our local sports guy was Len Berman, and we watched Len religiously.

Him and I have traded some messages over the years, and I used to tell him in our household, he was like Uncle Len. Hey, it's 6:00. Len's about to give the sports news. Again, back in the day, you didn't have Twitter, you didn't have Instagram, you didn't have the internet. You had to wait around for this stuff to get your sports news. We would sit down in front of the TV and we'd watch NBC four, and it was Len Berman and he was our guy.

John Boccacino:

Then parlaying off of those excited feelings as a kid, when did you realize that sports casting was what you wanted to do with your career?

Anish Shroff:

Yeah. I think I found out around 14, 15 years old that this is actually something you can do. Probably right around the time I was a sophomore in high school and I started getting serious about knowing what I wanted to do. I hadn't really done anything in the arena of whether it was student newspaper. I didn't do that. We didn't really have student television at my high school or student radio at my high school, but I kind of was thinking, hey, this would be cool to work in sports, to write about it or to broadcast it. It became an interest of mine probably around my sophomore year of high school.

I started looking at schools and I got to Syracuse and you go down the list, here's Bob Costas, here's Marv Albert, here's Mike Tirico, here's Ian Eagle, Dick Stockton, Marty Glickman, and the names, and Len Berman. So many of the guys I admired who I just mentioned to you before had gone to Syracuse. That very quickly became the school that I wanted to go to. Everything thereafter, I just pushed my chips all into the middle of the table and I said, I want to go to Syracuse and I want to work in sports and sports media in some capacity, whether that's TV, whether that's radio, whether that's print. Print was a thing at the time.



John Boccacino:

As a former gannet reporter, I will easily admit that that used to be a career you could make your living in, but things have sadly changed to the more digital scope, but no. The fact that you really took this passion, you ran with it, and it wasn't like you had a lot of role models who, and I'm going to put this very politely, but who looked like you. I know you're proud. You love... you're so proud of your South Asian heritage, and I know it must've been difficult trying to work towards that goal, not seeing a lot of broadcasters that look like you.

Anish Shroff:

You know what's funny, and I think I give my parents a lot of credit because the one part of this story, which I have told and I have spoken to South Asians about it, and I said, the one part of this story that we need to take ownership is this is not a profession that is looked upon favorably in the South Asian community. You're not going to be a doctor, you're not going to be an engineer. You're not getting your MBA. You don't want to go to grad school. What are you doing? He wants to go and do what, communications? That's just not what we do. A lot of South Asians who may have wanted to pursue this path, don't get the one thing that they need. The one thing that I had, and I didn't know it was so unique until many years later when I started talking to others like me, and they would ask me the question, were your parents cool with this? I was like, yeah, my parents encouraged me. Really? Yeah.

I never felt the pressure that I had to go be a doctor or a lawyer or an engineer or go get an MBA or do one of those things that are traditionally associated with the South Asian subculture. From that standpoint, we've got to take ownership and we got to encourage our kids to do what you want. I was lucky because my dad, who has an accounting degree, never worked a day as an accountant. His passion was photography, and he was a photographer for 40 years before he retired. I saw somebody in my house every single day go to work and do what they love, and that sounded so appealing.

Then I had a mom who came from this super progressive or India background in the sense that India was a country where the rags to riches story did not really exist. Slumdog Millionaire is a movie. There was very few cases of somebody who started with nothing there that turned themselves into something. So much of your success or failures depended on what you were born into. Yes, they're doing away with a caste system, but structurally, it's kind of like what we saw in this country post-slavery. Slavery is gone, but you still had Jim Crow, and there were still some shackles that were put on the African-Americans who now had their freedom, and there were still some hardships they had to overcome to make it in the world, and they still weren't getting a fair shake. In India, that was the case. My mom's dad, my grandfather, who I never really got to know, he passed away when I was seven years old, was this self-made man who when he was born, his mom died shortly after from complications due to childbirth.

His dad was never in the picture, so my great-grandfather was never in the picture, and he was essentially raised as this orphan who was passed around from uncle to aunt to uncle, none of them who really wanted to take care of him because he didn't come from a family that had a lot of means. That was just another mouth to feed, and he was a drain on that, but he was a self-starter and taught himself to read. You know the old story. My family says, I don't know the truth behind it, but they said he would go steal books from the library and read under the lamppost. I don't know how true that is, but that kind of gives you an idea to the person that he was. Then my grandmother, my mom's mom, was just this village girl, and she was married off to my grandfather when she was like 14 or 15. By the time she was 20, she had three kids. When I do the math on that, now I'm going, whoa, whoa, whoa.

This is a different time. This is a different era. I remember thinking, wait, she's only how many years older than my mom, and my mom was the third of five? Wait a minute. There's something wrong with this picture, but I guess what I'm trying to tell you is my grandfather started this factory, and by the time

he made it, he was in the textile business and he was exporting the places like Reebok, and he made it, made it, and he started from nothing. While he had some issues in terms of being a parent, because he never knew what that looked like and wasn't the warm, cuddly, fuzzy kind of grandpa, he had never held a child until he held my brother, who was like his third grandkid at the time, third or fourth grandkid at the time and the last one that he saw before he passed away. He held my brother. My dad put my brother in his arms, and that was the first time he held a child in his life.

What this man wanted was, he had three daughters, and he said, you guys are going to get educated and I want you all to have an education. He really hammered that home. My mom would tell me stories how my grandfather would have all these Longfellow quotes that he would always repeat. He used succeeds, and probably saying it wrong is the one who works and toils while his companion sleep. He was this guy who was again, self-made, well-read, and wanted his kids, especially his daughters, to be able to succeed on their own and not just hitch their future to getting married, which was the custom there. Back in India, you had daughters, you want to get them married. He said, no, I want them to have an education and I want them to be able to sustain for themselves if it comes to that.

Long story, with a lot of [inaudible], my mom, again, had this different mindset than a lot of Indian parents. She said, hey, I have a husband who does what he loves. I have a father who worked really hard to make something of himself and to make a better life for his family and didn't start with anything. She would tell me, yeah, it's going to be hard. There is nobody that looks like you, but that doesn't matter. Use that as a challenge. Be one of the first ones. I think what that did is it never deterred me. I never once thought until probably after I had "made it", oh man, yeah, there's nobody else that looked like me. I'm glad it was a type of ignorance where I think if I had been too caught up on that, well, there's no role models, no one's done this, I probably would've given up somewhere in the middle of the journey.

John Boccacino:

I appreciate you pulling back the curtain on this story because I feel like people, especially when it comes to broadcasters, they view you as a persona or a character, but you're so much more than that. Your depth is incredible. The fact that you're willing to weave in these great quotes from books you've read into your broadcast shows that you're really a deep thinking broadcaster who doesn't care just about the sports on the field, but wants to educate the listener and bring them along for the journey. I appreciate you sharing the insights there. I do want to parlay that into another similar question, though. I know you can be apprehensive sometimes about this question. I've read stories about this where you're the only minority radio play by play voice in the NFL, but what you just mentioned there about breaking down the barriers and having no fear in going after it, how else would you encourage someone who's listening or may listen down the future to follow following your footsteps?

Anish Shroff:

What's great now, when I look around the sports media landscape, and what's neat is so many of us are friends, but I see Adam Amin on Fox, I see Adnan Virk, who was with ESPN, now at the MLB Network, I see Kevin Negandhi anchoring Sports Center, Nabil Karim over on TNT, Zubin Mehenti on ESPN, Dari Nowkhah on the SCC Network, Shams breaks all this NBA news for however many outlets you see him on. There's so many of us now that are in this world. Priya Desai was doing stuff for HBO, written space, broadcast space, radio, and I know I'm missing a bunch of others, but these are friends and these are people that I have a high regard for.

I think now if there's somebody like me, they can look and turn on the TV and they can say, yeah, look, it's done, and it's not just one. It's here, here, here, here. I'll share a really cool story with you. Recently at Panthers training camp. There's a young boy, he's about nine, 10 years old. His name is Anique. His

mom had reached out to me shortly after I got the Panthers job. She said, hey, my son, he's a South Asian, he's of Indian descent, wants to be a sportscaster. He does this little YouTube show. Would you mind being a guest? I said, sure. I was talking to him and I could see the enthusiasm, the curiosity, also the sports knowledge, just how much he knew. He reminded me so much of me at that age where you wanted to soak it all up.

We had stayed in touch, the families had, and she reached out to me in the off-season and hey, it would be great if Anique can do something with you again. I said, we got to get him out to maybe training camp for a day. They came out to training camp and the Jets were having their joint practice with the Panthers, and he's asking Aaron Rogers questions and Bryce Young questions. Totally fearless. I got to meet him and his family in person, and I was so touched because I looked at him and I saw myself, and I was like, this would've been cool to have this kind of access. If I was at his age, if I had somebody who could have done that for me, and his mom kept on telling me, this means so much, this means so much. I tried not to let my emotions get to me, but it was just such a neat moment. One, you're able to pay that forward, but two, he's got somebody that he can look up to. He's got somebody who is doing something that maybe he wants to do one day.

Again, it's not just me, it's others, but I happen to be there with him on that day. That really touched me that yeah, now there's a chance for those young kids to look up and say, there's a bunch of us out there who are like me who are doing it. I think the challenge for us as a community is still to get the parents on board and get the community on board and make sure we can encourage and support as a community, because unfortunately, we're still weeding out too many people who just don't feel they have that community support to pursue it.

John Boccacino:

I love the paying it forward, I love hearing the stories, and you're right, we have to change the paradigm between going after a career that you want that will fulfill you. It's hard work, but any job that's worth having in this life, you have to put the work in. You got to put the effort to reach those dreams. The last question I got for you, Anish, before I let you go, I'm going to ask you something that you probably thought was going to come maybe a little earlier in the podcast. It's one of your more well-known moments. I want you to take us back to the infamous first Duke's Mayo Bowl, when you and your broadcasting partner, Mike Golic Jr, you really embrace the spirit of that bowl's primary sponsor.

Anish Shroff:

That is, and I've said this many times, that is as much fun that I've had broadcasting a game in my career. Mike, who's not only a good friend, but was so great to work with because of the personality, the knowledge, and when it came to food, nobody was all in like Mike. Taylor McGregor, who was our sideline reporter, the three of us became great friends through the course of the season. This game just kind of felt like a culmination of everything that had come before. We wanted to just have fun and let our hair back. It's sports. It was a bowl game at the end of the day between two six and six teams. You have a zillion bowl games. So many of them blend in. From our standpoint, we just wanted to make it different, and you had this sponsor that was willing to laugh at itself, that was willing to engage, that was willing to go all in with us.

By the way, before we even jumped in, they had said, we're going to dump the winning coach with mayonnaise. From our standpoint, we just wanted to make it a fun broadcast and make it a fun experience, when you can get caught and lost in the malaise of so many of these bowl games, and so many of them blend together, you have a sponsor who's trying to do something different. I thought the least we could do was play ball, but we embraced it. I think when we got the assignment, we were

ecstatic. We probably would've traded. Not that we would've even been in consideration for a college football playoff game, but I think our crew probably would've traded that to do the Mayo Bowl.

John Boccacino:

For our audience, if you haven't heard, please YouTube it because you can go see all these great clips of Anish And Mike Golic and Taylor. Mostly the two in the booth though, you're dipping various foods in mayonnaise to see how it tastes. There were Oreos that went into there. There was a whole plethora of food. What was your favorite to dunk in the mayo?

Anish Shroff:

PB and J easily, PB&J.

John Boccacino:

Wow.

Anish Shroff:

Honestly, I didn't know what to expect. PB and J with Duke's Mayo was solid.

John Boccacino:

It's something I wasn't expecting to hear for an answer, but again, we love to get the guests here on the podcast really opening up. Anish, it's really been so much fun to both follow your career from afar, but then also to get to have this conversation here on the Syracuse University podcast. It's been great telling your story. We can't wait to watch you on our TVs and hear you on our radios coming up this fall, this winter, this spring. Your depth of broadcasting, to see what you've been able to accomplish, has been so impressive, and yet you're so down to earth, you're so humble. Keep up the great work and always appreciate your time.

Anish Shroff:

Thank you, my friend.

John Boccacino:

Thanks for checking out the latest installment of the 'Cuse Conversations podcast. My name is John Boccacino, signing off for the 'Cuse Conversations Podcast.